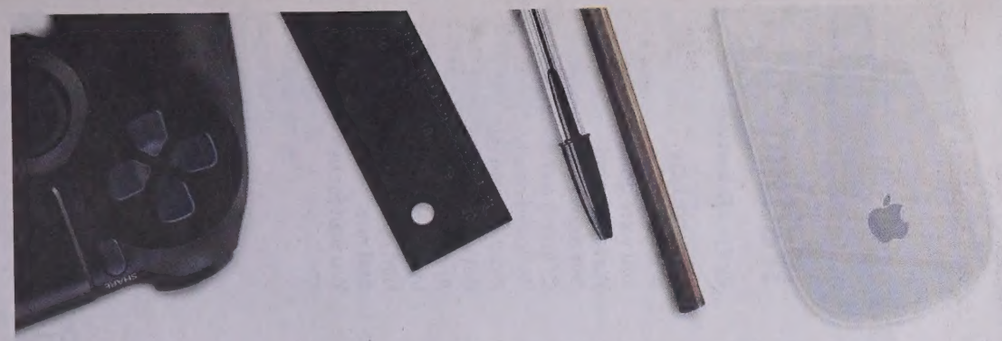

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ALBERTA Street News

Volume 11 Issue 5 2014

On the last day of its final national truth-telling event, the TRC hosted a party to mark symbolically the birthdays of students who, it learned, had never been allowed to celebrate birthdays at residential school.

Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada

A ceremonial bentwood box accompanied the Truth and Reconciliation to receive offerings at all seven national events.

Photos by Allan Sheppard

Canada

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ALBERTA STREET NEWS
Volume 11, Issue 3 , 2014

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Photos: Theresa Walsh Cooke, David Burke, Allan Sheppard, Linda Dumont, John Zapantis, Donald Austin

Cartoon: Ian Stacey

Correction – In our April issue the writer of the story on page 10 was Maria B. not Andie W.L.

*Deadline for June issue – May 10, 2014.
Opinions expressed are those of the writers*

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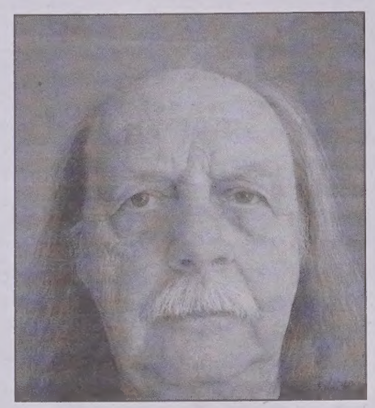
On Personal Responsibility

Truth and/or Reconciliation and/or Consequences?

"Education is not the filling of a bucket, but the lighting of a fire."



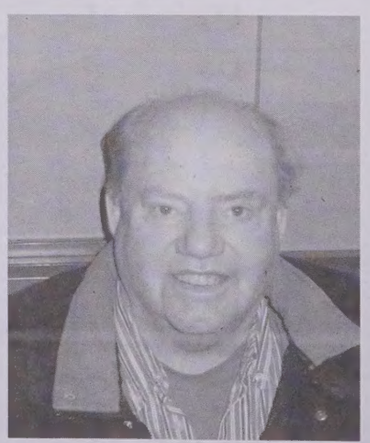
By Allan Sheppard

The origin of that observation about education is uncertain, but it seems to have its roots at least 2,000 years in the past. It is often cited because it captures one side of a debate that continues today, as demonstrated by controversy around Alberta Education's current curriculum redesign process. The debate is necessary and healthy. A sensible education policy would aim at filling a bucket of knowledge and lighting a fire of inquiry. A practical debate would aim at finding a viable position between the two extremes. Who would choose an approach that effectively overturns all three options?

The answer: we. We Canadians. For 150 years, beginning in the 1840s, our governments and the churches that enacted government policies—with our blessing—chose to educate (truly mis-educate) Aboriginal peoples of our country through an Indian Residential School system that did not try seriously either to impart useful knowledge or to light fires of inquiry within children they essentially kidnapped into the system. In fact they sought—and were deliberately designed and intended to seek—precisely the opposite.

Their first goal was to destroy through their children all cultural, traditional, and spiritual knowledge in Aboriginal societies. The second goal was to extinguish in captive students the fires of personal and community identity, pride, self-awareness, self-confidence, hope, and initiative. Politicians, bureaucrats, and church leaders now sometimes deny that; but they did not effectively replace what they forcibly took away, so it was the result.

Emptied of self-affirming



Waiting

By Ryan Robertson

You were here
And suddenly
You were gone –
We left behind
Felt the remorse
Of losing someone
We loved dearly ....
It didn't seem fair
But we realize
Another room
In heaven
Had opened
And now
You wait for us

THE VIEWES PRESENTED IN THIS PUBLICATION ARE THOSE OF THE WRITER

knowledge that had served their ancestors for millenniums; denied any sense of place in or value to their communities; children were sent home as hollow shells of what they might, could, should have been. Not surprisingly, many filled their emptiness with addictions, self-loathing, and violence.

The result was a viral assortment of dysfunctional communities comprising dysfunctional former students and, in due course, their dysfunctional families. Separated in their formative years from nuclear and extended families; alienated from traditional parenting and community supports; raised without love in harsh, intimidating, institutional settings; they did not know how to raise their own families or relate in healthy ways to their neighbours. Predictably, they raised their own children and related to their communities in the loveless, intimidating, violent ways they had learned at school. Their and their neighbours' children maintain the dysfunctional legacy as intergenerational survivors to this day.

All that and more was asserted and demonstrated at the seventh and final national event hosted in Edmonton, March 27 to 30, by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) of Canada.

Held in communities across Canada, TRC national events were intended to inform Canadians about issues arising from Canada's residential-school history and legacy. More importantly, they invited survivors and their descendents to tell personal, family and community stories about what happened to them and theirs at school and afterward: to tell their personal, family, and community truths.

A residential school-survivor friend invited me to join her as emotional and moral support while she gave her testimony. She spoke at a listening circle for representatives of the four churches that operated schools: Roman Catholic, Anglican, United, and Presbyterian. She expanded her story at a private video-recording session that will be archived in Winnipeg.

More than 400 survivors told their stories in such formal ways. More than 3,000 people registered for the event and listened in substantial numbers to the stories.

That was the truth component of the process. My friend thought it healthy and helpful—though difficult—to share her story and hear the stories of others.

She was less positive about the reconciliation component. She said in her statements and privately to me that she believes reconciliation may not be possible, given the way she and so many others—those who survived and the as yet unknown thousands who died at school—were treated, and are still being treated as survivors. She is prepared to forgive, but not to forget or acquiesce to inevitability. The pain is too deep.

There is no agreed or agreeable definition of reconciliation. The TRC acknowledges this: "We know that reconciliation is very hard to categorize or explain. It means one something to someone, and perhaps carries a very different feeling or meaning to someone else. It is at its core very individual, yet when considered collectively, reconciliation can change the very way we look at ourselves and at our fellow citizens." (http://tinyurl.com/owdvyh6)

Perhaps. That is certainly a worthwhile hope. But…

One definition of reconciliation will be awkward, possibly irresolvable. It comes from the realm of accounting: "the action or practice of making one account consistent with another, esp. by allowing for transactions begun but not yet completed." (Emphasis added: Concise Canadian Oxford Dictionary, 2005)

When all is said and done on the sorry tale of Canada's residential schools and our treatment of Aboriginal peoples in general, it will still be necessary to account fairly for what Aboriginal peoples have paid (willingly and otherwise) into their account with Canada and what they have received.

Federal governments, especially the current one, want to discuss such transactions in terms of dollars, specifically the dollars they give Aboriginal communities year, after year, after (if one is to accept the current federal rhetoric) undeserving year. What governments are unwilling to discuss—or factor into the reconciliation process—is what the Canadian government and people have received and taken in the form of land, waters, wildlife, natural resources, and in cultural, heritage, and community opportunities and assets, especially language.

I note, with irony, that the accounting definition of reconciliation comes from double-entry bookkeeping, where it helps check and balance an enterprise's operations to ensure integrity. It's a useful practice, but I suspect that most Aboriginal people would (justifiably) regard the notion of double-entry reconciliation as another form of government double dealing. Or, to use a pointed metaphor that may have originated with Canadian Aboriginals, another case of Canada's (our) federal government speaking with a forked tongue. (See Wikipedia entry for forked tongue.)

Truth and reconciliation are fine and desirable, even necessary. But they mean little or nothing without trust.

Notwithstanding the TRC's admirable efforts, trust remains in short supply.

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Snack - 9:30 a.m.
Lunch - 12:00 p.m.
Snack-3:30 p.m.
Dinner- 6:00 p.m

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Dinner: $4.50

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11216 Ave NE, Calgary
7 days/week - 4:00 pm - 9:00 p.m.

Community Supports
Streetlight - Youth for Christ
Parks at 10th ave & 1 st Street SE
Monday & Thursday

Emergency Meals
Alex Community Health Centre
Unit 101,1318 Centre Street NE
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403-253-2055

Food Hamper
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Food Bank
Calgary Inter-Faith Food Bank
403-253-2059

Food Bank
Calgary Poppy Fund and Veterans
Food Bank
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Food Bank
Muslim Families Network Society: Halal Food
403-466-6367
www.MuslimFamiliesNetwork.com

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8336-34th Ave NW
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Inn from the Cold
403-263-8384

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CUPS (Calgary Urban Project Society)
128-7th Avenue SE

Food Hamper & Meals
Feed the Hungry, St. Mary's Cathedral
Sunday Dinner
3:30 pm - 5:00 p.m.

Meals on the street outside City Hall
Calgary Street Church
Monday - 6:00pm,
Wednesday11:00a.m.
Friday - 6:00pm Sunday, 1:00 p.m.

TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION

Residential School Survivors share their truth at the Truth and Reconciliation Conference in Edmonton

Ashes from the Sacred Fire that burned at every TRC conference were moved from one conference site to the next for each of the seven conferences.
Photo by Allan Sheppard

The truth is powerful. Sharing the truth and being heard and acknowledged as we share that truth is an important step towards healing. For this reason, the survivors of the Residential Schools were given an opportunity to share their truth at a series of seven conferences across Canada – in Winnipeg, Inuvik, Halifax, Saskatoon, Montreal, British Columbia and the final conference in Edmonton.

The four day Truth and Reconciliation Conference (TRC) was held at the Shaw Conference Centre March 27 to 30th.; the seventh and final event mandated by the 2007 Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement. This historic gathering place took place in Treaty 6 Plains Cree Territory. The conference offered a unique opportunity for all Canadians, Aboriginal and non Aboriginal, to hear first hand the experiences of those who attended the residential schools, to bear witness to the legacy of the residential school system and to celebrate the Aboriginal culture.

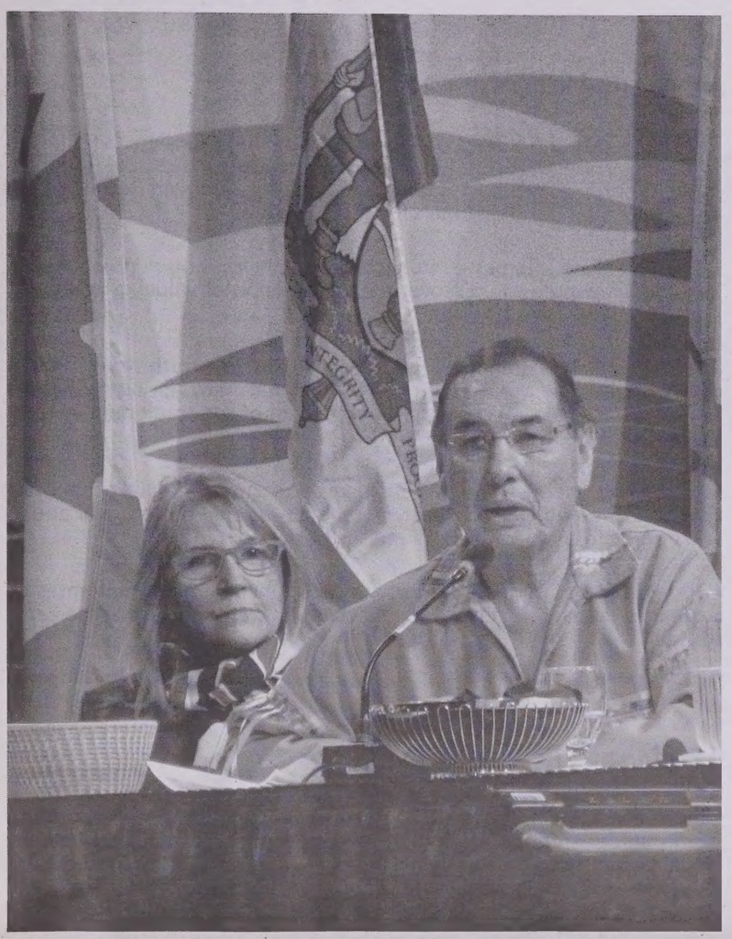
If the stories shared by survivors were difficult to hear, they were much more difficult to have been lived. Some of the survivors wept as they recalled the pain and abuse of the experience. But as one speaker said, "This is a time for moving forward, forgiving but not forgetting."

The event kicked off with the lighting of the Sacred Fire. Ashes from the Winnipeg Sacred Fire were transported by members of the Indian Residential Survivor committee to Inuvik where they were added to the Sacred Fired that burned during the TRC Northern National Event in June/ July 2011. From here the ashes were taken to the Atlantic National event in Halifax October 2011, then to the Saskatchewan National event in Saskatoon in June, 2012, then to the Quebec National event in Montreal in April, 2013, then the British Columbia National event in September, 2013.

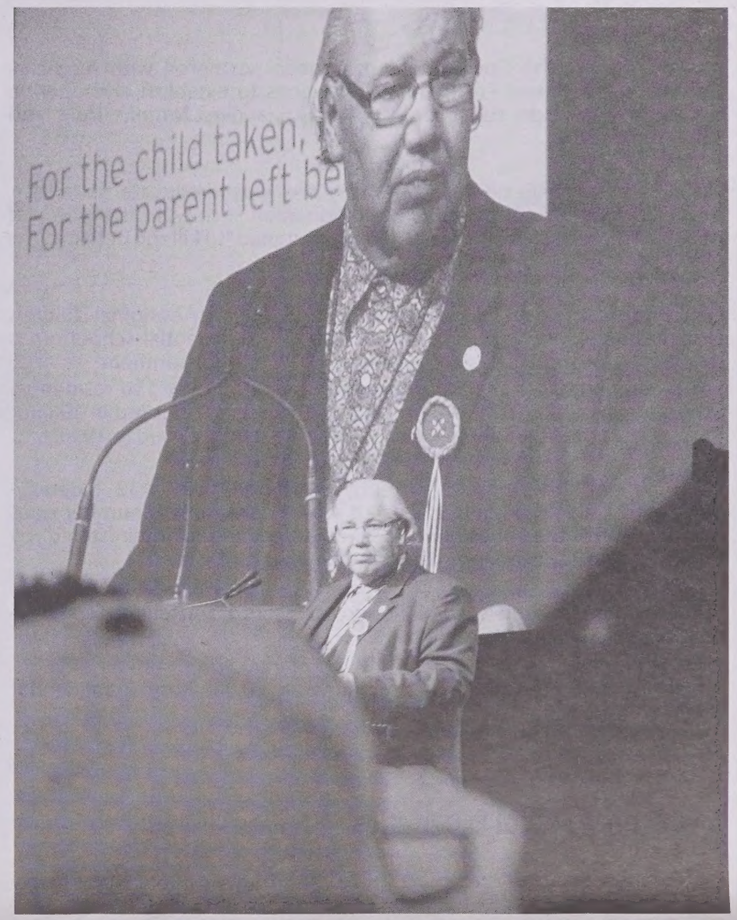
The ashes from the Sacred Fire were added to the fire that burned in Edmonton during the four day conference. People could share a prayer or make an offering to the Sacred Fire.

The Bentdood Box
Photo by Linda Dumont

Throughout the Truth and Reconciliation Conference the Bentwood box represented the strength and resilience of Residential School survivors and their descendents and honours those who are no longer living. As the box traveled to different provinces and territories, it stood on centre stage and offerings were made to it to commemorate personal journeys towards healing. It is now housed in the National Research Centre at the University of Manitoba. Carved by Coast Salish Artist Luke Marston, the Bentwood Box was steamed and bent from a single piece of cedar. The carved panels represent the unique cultures of former First Nations, Inuit and Métis students. The artist pays respect to his own grandmother by depicting her residential school experience at Kuper Island in the carvings.



Commissioner Marie Wilson and Chief Wilton Littlechild by Allan Sheppard



Commissioner Murray Sinclair by Allan Sheppard

After the national event closed on March 30, Idle No More organizers, members and supporters marched down Jasper Avenue to the legislature building, where they were met and addressed by Acting Premier Dave Hancock, Speaker Gene Zwozdesky, Edmonton Mayor Don Iveson and Treaty 6 chiefs. By Allan Sheppard

Brief History of Residential Schools

• In the 1870's, the Government of Canada partnered with Anglican, Catholic, United, and Presbyterians churches to establish and operate boarding and residential schools for Aboriginal (First Nations, Inuit, and Métis) children.

• The intent of the Residential School System was to educate, assimilate, and integrate Aboriginal people into Canadian society. In the words of one government official, it was a system designed "to kill the Indian in the child."

• Attendance at residential schools was mandatory for Aboriginal children across Canada, and failure to send children to residential school often resulted in the punishment of parents, including imprisonment.

• The federal government and churches operated over 130 residential schools across Canada. The number of active schools peaked in 1931 at 80. The last federally-administered residential school closed in 1996.

• The federal government currently recognizes that 132 federally-supported residential schools existed across Canada. This number does not recognize those residential schools that were administered by provincial/territorial governments and churches.

• Over 150,000 children (some as young as 4 years old) attended federally-administered residential schools.

• It is estimated that there are approximately 80,000 Residential School Survivors alive today.

Residential School Experience

• Many Aboriginal children were taken from their homes, often forcibly removed and separated from their families by long distances. Others who attended residential schools near their communities were often prohibited from seeing their families outside of occasional permitted visits.

• Students were forbidden to speak their language or practice their culture, and were often punished for doing so.

• Many students were forced to do manual labour, and were fed poor quality food. There are many accounts of students being provided mouldy, maggot-infested and rotten foods.

• Other experiences reported from Survivors of residential schools include sexual and mental abuse, beatings and severe punishments, overcrowding, illness, children forced to sleep outside in the winter, the forced wearing of soiled underwear on the head or wet bed sheets on the body, use of students in medical experiments, disease and in some cases death.

• Many students received a sub-standard education. As late as 1950, according to a study by the Department of Indian Affairs, over 40 per cent of the teaching staff had no professional training.

• Some students have spoken of the positive experiences of residential schools, and of receiving an adequate education. However, overall it was a negative experience as indicated by various statements of apology issued by the churches and federal government.

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Residential School Impacts

• In many cases, the abuses, and even the common experiences of having attended residential school have caused impacts such as post traumatic stress syndrome and have made it difficult for Survivors to engage in family, social, and professional circumstances.

• Survivors were often away from their parents for long periods of time and this prevented the discovering and learning of valuable parenting skills.

• The removal of children from their homes also prevented the transmission of language and culture, resulting in the fact that many Aboriginal people no longer speak their language or are aware of the traditional cultural practices.

• Adaptation of abusive behaviours learned from residential school has also occurred and caused intergenerational trauma, the cycle of abuse and trauma from one generation to the next.

• Aboriginal communities are still in need of healing with high rates of substance abuse, violence, crime, child apprehension, disease, and suicide.

Healing and Reconciliation

• In the early 1990's, as a result of escalating social problems in Aboriginal communities throughout Canada, the federal government created the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP). RCAP confirmed a link between social crisis in Aboriginal communities, residential schools and the legacy of intergenerational trauma. In response to RCAP, the federal government initiated the Gathering Strength initiative which then led to the creation of the Aboriginal Healing Foundation (AHF) in 1998. The AHF funds community based healing initiatives that address the legacy of physical and sexual abuse in the Residential School System, including intergenerational impacts.

• Hundreds of healing initiatives and projects have been funded through the AHF, and many other independent programs and initiatives have been created throughout Canada to heed the healing objective.

• In 2007, the Government of Canada implemented the Indian Residential School Settlement Agreement. The settlement agreement included: Common Experience Payment to all former students of federal administered residential schools; the Independent Assessment Process to address compensation for physical and sexual abuse; establishment of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission; healing initiatives; and a fund for commemoration projects.

• The churches and government have offered various statements of regret, condolence, sorrow and/or apology for their roles in administering residential schools including:

- United Church of Canada (1986)
- Oblate Missionaries of Mary Immaculate (Roman Catholic) (1991)
- Anglican Church (1993)
- Presbyterian Church (1994)
- Government of Canada (2008)
- Roman Catholic Church (2009)

• The Indian Residential Schools Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was established in 2008, with a mandate to inform all Canadians about what happened in residential schools. The TRC will document the truth of Survivors, their families, communities and anyone personally affected by the residential school experience. The TRC hopes to guide and inspire First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples and all Canadians in a process of truth and healing leading toward reconciliation and renewed relationships based on mutual understanding and respect.

• In response to the loss of language, there is a growing movement to revive and preserve unique Aboriginal cultural beliefs, social structures, and spiritual values.

• Through initiatives of the Legacy of Hope Foundation and National Day of Healing and Reconciliation, Canadians are learning this history and understanding the impact that it has had and continues to have on their communities.

A Rory Story

Let this story be told. Deep in the Canadian Forest. I was attacked by Scary, the first male Banshee. He was trying to steal my, Pot of Gold. In fact, the hooligan was quite rude and bold.

So I gave the aggressive little Fruit, a good boot. Right in the center of his lucky charms, and I kept my gold. Yes there is nothing wrong with self-defense. Written by: RoryGaudon©2004

PETER GOLDRING
Member of Parliament
Edmonton East

RELIGIOUS LEADERSHIP CAN HELP SOLVE UKRAINE'S CRISIS

The church is the most trusted institution in Ukraine, more trusted than political or academic institutions. If the leaders of Ukraine's churches (and other religious groups) were to unite and make a joint proclamation of the Ukrainian embracement of linguistic and cultural diversity and inclusivity, it would go far in reducing tensions in that country.

Those tensions stem from actions by the new government in Kyiv that were perceived to weaken Russian-language protection. Many of those in the eastern, predominantly Russian-speaking, area of the country, who are proud Ukrainians, saw it as an erosion of their linguistic rights. It is these linguistic and cultural issues that religious leaders are best positioned to address, offering a non-partisan, cross-cultural approach.

I have discussed this at length with Bishop Job of Edmonton, and Archbishop Gabriel of Montreal, both of the Russian Orthodox Church, also with Ambassador Vadym Prystaiko of Ukraine and Igor Girenko of the Embassy of Russia, as well as Dr. Andrew Bennett, Canada's Ambassador for Religious Freedom. All concur that if the All-Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religious Organizations in Kyiv were to agree on a Ukrainian national message to be delivered through all churches in all regions of Ukraine, it would have great value.

The All-Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religious Organizations could dialogue with Ukrainians, seeing what they want in terms of linguistic and cultural inclusivity for the future of Ukraine, then take this instruction from the people to the presidential candidates. This should be done immediately so that the presidential candidates for the May 25 election will have the opportunity to campaign on this inclusivity message to take to the parliament for reinforcing legislation upon becoming president.

The time for the religious leaders to act is now. Let them listen to the people then speak with a united voice.

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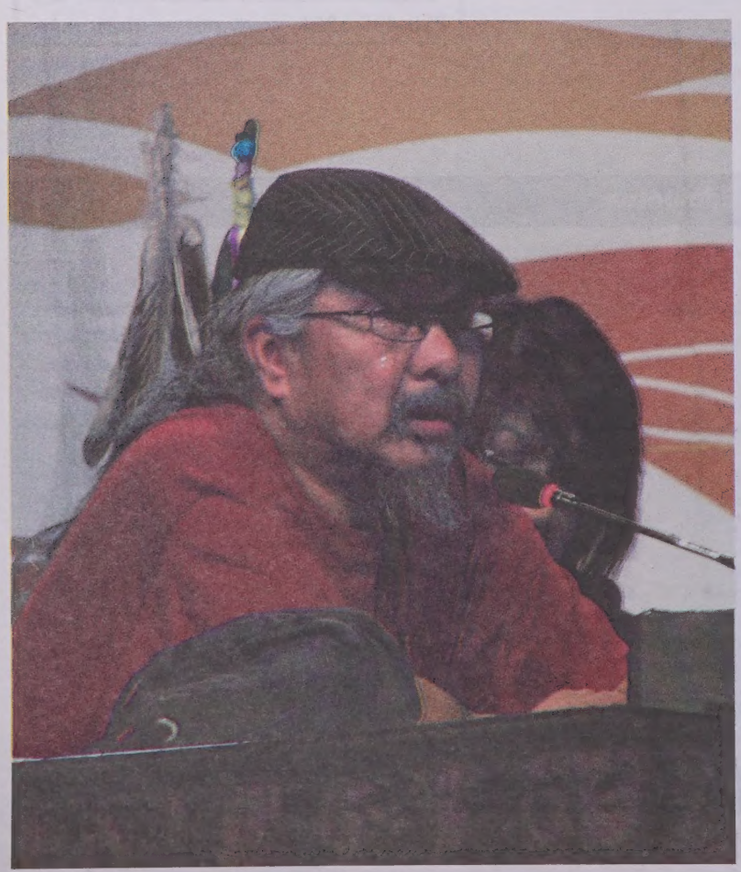
LIFE AT THE RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS

The Treaties signed with First Nations people had both a medicine clause and an educational component – the government of Canada was to see to the medical needs of the people and to the education of the children. In the words of John A. Macdonald the purpose of the schools was to "assimilate the Indian people in all respects with the inhabitants of the dominion of Canada." Government officials concluded that this would be more easily accomplished if the children were removed from the reserves and close contact with their parents, who reinforced their culture. In the schools, the children were given new names or simply called by numbers, taught to worship a new god, dressed in strange clothing and lived a regimented life where they were forbidden to speak any language other than English. Destruction of Aboriginal identity was one of the key goals of the residential school system and the government's goal was to continue "until there is not a single Indian in Canada who has not been absorbed into the body politic, and there is no Indian question and no Indian Department."

The Roman Catholic and protestant missionaries were fired by the belief that they had a responsibility to spread the Christian religion throughout the world, and they opened missions and mission schools in many Aboriginal communities across Canada. As early as 1826 the Anglican missionary John West opened a boarding school for Aboriginal children at Red River. The children were taught reading, writing, arithmetic and religion. The Anglican Church, the Catholic Church and the United Church favoured residential schools built with small grants from the government with the Roman Catholic Church operating about 60% of the schools.

Residential School survivors share their truth with the help of support person who stood by them. **Photo by Allan Sheppard**



Sharing The Truth in Their Own Words

By Linda Dumont

At the TRC Conference Residential School survivors had the opportunity to share the truth about their experiences and about the lasting impact on their families. It was difficult for people to listen to the stories; so much so that volunteers handed out tissues to wipe away the tears as the words were spoken, sometimes with tears.

There were common themes to the stories – about how they were ripped from their homes and loved ones and taken to the residential school, sometimes never to return.

A gray haired man spoke, "I am a survivor of St. Michael at Alert Bay, B.C. I struggled not to be late, but I was such a tiny child. When I opened the door I could hear someone screaming loud. Poor little kid was being beaten by the staff. I cried very loudly. The senior boy heard my cry. The little boy was taken to the infirmary to be patched up – not to the hospital. They stitched him up. I was about seven. That was my first feeling of learning how to hate. I was angry but very quiet. I learned how to steal – you were always hungry. I learned how to lie – to stick up for my little warriors. I learned how to stop those cries because you would be punished."

Henry Robinson: "I am from Loubocan Lake. I've got broken bones – both my ears were broken because I spoke my own language. They broke my inner ear. I was dizzy for four months. At 13 years old I had enough. I saw a young lady and she wanted to go to the washroom. We were taking catechism and she raised her hand. You raised one finger for number one and two fingers for number two. She raised one finger. The

Lateral Effect of Residential Schools

Residential School survivors share their stories

Photo by Allan Sheppard

Like the ripples on a pond when you drop a stone, the effects of the Residential School have wide swept impact for all of us.

The Residential School experience not only affected the survivors, but their children and grandchildren generationally as well as anyone who married or was in a relationship with them. As one survivor put it, he learned fear and harshness, then he raised his children the same way. Alcohol and drugs provided a way for some to live with the painful memories. This led to broken families with the children being raised in foster homes, too often foster homes where they were subjected to discrimination and abuse and a loss of their language and culture. We are seeing the long term effects of the Residential Schools on the streets where more than half of the homeless people are Aboriginal, in the jails where the majority of inmates are Aboriginal and in the 1000's of Aboriginal children in foster homes, ripped from their parents and their homes.

I am not Aboriginal, but my life and the lives of my children have been strongly impacted by the Residential Schools. I had no idea when I married my ex-husband that he was Aboriginal, probably because race never entered my mind. It was only later that I learned about his background in foster homes, then he re-connected with his birth family and we all became instant Indians according to Indian Affairs. My children have full treaty rights. His mother was very distant, and took no interest in her grandchildren, or me, and only seemed to care for my husband when he could drive her around on errands or do things for her. She never gave anyone a Christmas or birthday gift, but was an esteemed volunteer in a local elementary school. She did so well there that she received an award for her volunteerism. I learned, not through her, because she never spoke about it, but through her aunt, that they had been taken to residential school when my former mother in law was five and the aunt was seven.

My former husband (we finally divorced after I left him) struggled with alcoholism, and had a learning disability, probably from foetal alcohol syndrome because his mother drank heavily when she was younger. Like his mother, he showed a lack of feeling for anyone but himself, so he treated us as possessions to be used, and became dangerously abusive if anyone did not do what he wanted. After he re-united with his birth family, he had one more thing to hold against me - I was white so I was to blame for everything that had happened to him – "you stole our land…." By Linda Dumont

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nun said no. She raised her hand a second time. Again the nun said no. She put her head down on the desk and peed herself. I spoke up to the nun. The priest was called in. I knocked him out. I ran away to B.C, and learned what life was all about.

They used force and fear in the residential school. Where I came from it was love based. By the time I was seven I had never heard an adult yelling at a child or slapping them. We learned freedom. They wanted the resources so they had to brainwash us to think their way.

Phillip Bellerose from Driftpile: 'The residential school was seven miles from the reserve. My childhood days were nice, clean, with loving parents and grandparents. My parents tried to keep me out of school so I was 8 years old when I started school. I was five years behind…..Everything was harsh – we were slapped around, knocked around, told we were speaking the devil's tongue. I have a lot of lumps and bumps from being knocked around. At residential school you had no say – it was their way or else. ….

"When the Prime minister apologized and the Pope apologized I did not accept it because they are not the ones who did this to me. The ones who did this are gone. I remember the names of the nun who done this, the priest who done this."

Sarah Jean: "It was a beautiful life in the woods on the reserve in a log cabin and in a tent in the summer – then being taken away in my little moccasins. They took me from my family. That was a hard day. I didn't see them for ten months. I was taken to All Saints Anglican Residential School in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan. There was a long dormitory, a white bed to sleep, strange food, lined up on benches. My parents told me to do as you are told.

Kokum said things are going to get tough "Whatever happens to you happens on the outside." It kept me going. "I saw this little girl in a big dog cage eating her meals. I asked why and I got slapped. Later one of the older students told me it was because she didn't eat right because she had no teeth.

"I cried because I wanted to go home and I got whacked. You learn to cry quietly…. I saw a girl that ran away - they cut her hair off and put her in a big dog cage with bales of hay to sleep and two dishes like a dog – one for water and one for dry bread. I didn't run away but my brothers did ….

I went to Bertel School for Indians. It was the same kind of school. You had a number – they didn't call you by name – you had a number. …..

Louise Gordon a member of the Wolf Clan in Atlin B.C.: "I remember the bus was driving away and my younger sister was running after the bus crying as her older brothers and sisters were taken. My father, his wife and all nine of us children went to residential school…….I was beaten by the principal until I blacked out for speaking my language. I recalled that experience years later under hypnosis. …. My family and I could not sit together…. My parents went to residential school in the back of an open truck box. They were all dusty and exposed to the weather.

"I was abused at the residential school – emotional, mental, spiritual, and sexual abuse. I have to tell my story in order to heal. I am not sure there is such a thing as reconciliation but I hope for mutual understanding and respect. The intergenerational legacy must be acknowledged and healed. They wanted to kill the Indian in me, that left me an empty person without identity, pride and hope."

The Pain Goes On

Generational Effect of Residential School

By Michael LeClercq

A descendant of a Residential School Survivor shares his truth at the TRC. **Photo by Allan Sheppard**

There is a woman out there who sells papers with her little black dog named Chewy.

This woman is my birth mother. My current name (was changed after adoption on Febuary 21, 1987) is Michael LeClercq. I used to be known as Lucien Louis Joseph Junior Hamelin (fathers surname) or Kasper as I was named at birth by nurses. I was known as and went by Kasper before age seven. I have two brothers and five sisters.

I was adopted with one sister and a brother with me, two sisters (twins) were adopted by a different family, The other two, as I understand, are also adopted and one is in permanent care in Alberta Hospital.

When I was 19, I was reunited with my birth mother as I needed to find out for myself what had become of her. I am now 34 years old, I have a 17 year old son.

All of us were taken away because my mother was beyond abusive. She used to beat me and my brother. I remember ash trays to the head, wooden broomsticks and mops to the head, beer bottles and various other objects. This wasn't punishment once in a while; this was how life was. We didn't cry over spilled milk- we ran like hell because the broom was going to get used until it broke over me and my brothers' backs. I'm in no way telling a lie or exaggerating. This woman put us through hell.

I have suffered at the hands of this woman. My life has been a horror of post traumatic stress, nightmares, and mental illness as I was diagnosed years ago with bi-polar disorder. My life is a roller coaster of emotions, extreme paranoia and legal troubles. However when I'm on my good days you'd never know. On my bad phases you wouldn't care because I've been in need and it has left me feeling like I wasn't welcome. I'm usually incapable of functioning or maintaining stable employment and I'm homeless most of the time as has been the norm since I was 17. Due to my bi polar I can't be in a shelter as it makes my condition worse being around stressors. Solitude keeps me somewhat able to keep positive and take steps to continue to try and improve my life.

You may have seen me years ago. I slept in the recycle bins behind the market in minus 30, attended the youth place across the street (Karen and Naomi are the best people on earth) and I've begged for food and money to survive and find myself in that same predicament now.

I was on the streets in Calgary and got my GED in 2009, then acquired my drivers' license in 2010 and my motorcycle license in 2012. I've had no help in buying my first car in 2010- a 2000 Chrysler Cirrus, then a Xmas present to myself in 2011- a 2000 GMC Sonoma SLS Extreme. I traded my GMC for my motorcycle-2000 Suzuki GSXR750 which I still own. And after working on the twinning of highway 63 running heavy equipment and losing a Toyota four runner junker I bought for $350.00 by lending it to family of my son's mother, I decided I deserve something nice. Here comes the part where no matter what, I just can't catch a break and the world just wants me to lose everything I work for and leave me begging on the streets to people who don't care whether I live or die:

I bought a 2003 Cadillac CTS because I worked hard, made money and I'm not letting anyone tell me that I can't experience life and have something awesome. Xmas present to me, thanks to a careless driver was t-boned and since then I've been unable to return to work until repairs are made. I have nowhere to go, nowhere to live, no one to help me in my time of need. With my bi polar kicking in, I'm stressed and on medical assistance, on medication and unable to work. I sought assistance at the advice of a sister to see the "paper seller/ mother of mine". This is how she treated me: I've been kicked out in the cold every night yet she let's others stay, spending the money she earns on beer and I find out she has beer in the fridge and she won't pay back the money. She has also told her neighbours she doesn't know whose car (my caddy) is parked out back after she told me to park there. She is setting me up to get towed !

I've been starving for days, cold, hungry and freezing in my car waiting on insurance to do repairs. and this woman is out earning money so she can buy beer and support the drunks that occupy her time and leave me out in the cold. She even has the nerve to try and blame me for the actions of the drunks causing a rift between her and her landlord.

This woman tossed me to the wolves. She ruined the lives of her children and my life and my struggles are a direst result of her abuse. To this day she has seen fit to continue to refuse to attempt to repair the damages she is responsible for and to help her own blood.

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OPINION

The Winner Takes It All

By Timothy Wild

Over the lead up to the last few federal elections, the biggest threat Rob Anders, the MP for Calgary West, has had to face was not from his Green, Liberal or NDP opponents but, rather, from Tory rivals in the nomination race. This is also true of the current nomination battle where Anders is facing stiff opposition from Ron Liepert, a former provincial cabinet minister. There has been quite a bit of coverage of this contest, and Rob Anders has made a number of comments indicating that supporters of his opponents are not truly Conservatives, but are actually people who have just joined the party to support someone, whom Anders considers to be a less Conservative or even conservative candidate.

Then, at the provincial level, we have a similar story of the spectre of non-Tories influencing Tory politics, personalities and potential. Opponents of Alison Redford argued that a considerable number of people who supported her leadership bid were not dyed in the wool Progressive Conservatives but outsiders wanting to move the party to a more "progressive" position or conspiring to undermine the Tory social, economic and environmental agenda. There is certainly some truth in that assertion. I know a number of people who actually did this, and supported Alison Redford for a variety of reasons. And, let's face it, the cumbersome and wide-open electoral process adopted by the PCs for their last couple of leadership contests promoted this kind of recruitment for supporters.

Anyway, although at the time of writing we are still not sure of the situation in Calgary West we all know how this turned out for the now former Premier Redford. And I think this raises an important issue: both of the above examples point to the fact that, currently, politics is happening largely within the ruling parties, as opposed to between parties. Following from this, I think it also shows a lack of faith in the ability of our current electoral system to represent a wide variety of views, opinions and policy options. In large part, I think this is related to our use of the old fashioned "first past the post" system of electing our representatives.

In the first past the post system, the candidate with the most votes wins. This might be of some legitimacy in a simple two party race. But when there are a wide variety of candidates, frequently candidates win with support from a minority of the people who actually voted, let alone of the total eligible electorate. And this happens in many of the constituencies across both the country and province, so we have majority governments supported by a minority of the people. Therefore, I can see why people would want to join the "winners" to help influence public policy from within. However, ultimately this results in a very narrow provision of authentic choices at election time.

An answer to this is the adoption of some method of proportional representation (PR); that is there is some mechanism to ensure that the percentage of votes received by a party is reflected (somewhat) in the actual distribution of seats in the legislature. Some examples of this include a completely pure method of PR, such as the one that was used in Italy, where the seats were distributed exclusively by the percentage of vote. Others use a modified version of PR. For example, in Germany parties receiving at least 5% of the vote are guaranteed seats in the Bundestag, and in Scotland where there is a combination of some seats selected by first past the post and others are determined on a regional basis by PR. Finally in the states of Australia there is a transferable method of voting which allows people to select their first, second, third choice etc until the seats are filled.

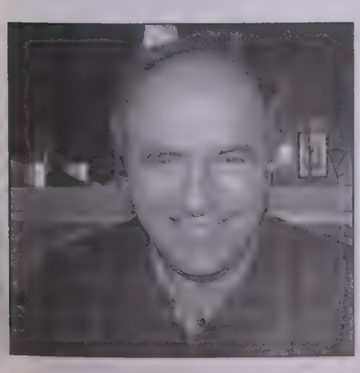
At root, proportional representation is fundamentally democratic, ensuring that a significant majority of the votes actually count. However, beyond the electoral mathematics, there is also the fact that PR promotes more options for the voter. Parties can adopt and offer a platform that helps aggregate and articulate certain views that need to be considered in the broadest sense; views that perhaps challenge the prevailing social and economic relations of production. Whereas with the development of party platforms in the conventional first past the post process, it is the win that counts as opposed to the fruits of democratic discourse. Certainly, conventional views are well represented in the various legislatures using PR; however, other views are also factored into that legislative dialogue.The Green party in Germany in the 1980s was able to bring the public's attention to environmental and peace issues, and has subsequently been represented in coalition governments. The Senior Citizens Party was able to introduce a more nuanced discussion of aging into the Scottish Parliament. The Italian Communist Party was able to make substantial gains for urban workers and peasants. And the use of PR for Senate elections in Australia has helped put a hold, or at least a brake, on the destructive social, environmental and economic policies of the Abbott government. Overall, I would suggest that proportional representation amplifies the profile of social justice issues in both the electoral cycle and in the setting of the public policy agenda.

Given our current retrograde electoral system, I can see why people would want to influence public policy from within the governing party. But, at the end of the day, it doesn't really work. I think the Redford situation is a perfect example of that. What is really needed is an overhaul of our electoral system and the introduction of some model of PR. I am not suggesting that all seats be assigned by proportional representation. We could still have some single member seats to help constituents with local issues. But we do need some way to ensure that there is both a wide variety of options in elections and that votes actually translate into representation. PR provides more options for people, and it is precisely this wide range of options that makes democracy healthy, captivating and inclusive.

Room For The Night

How I tried to bargain my way into a jail cell

By John Zapantis



One summer evening back in July of 1989 while driving through Creston BC in an old beat down 76 Camero along with a friend, Darlene, I had an open six pack of Labatt's Blue seated in the back of my vehicle. We were heading to the BC- Idaho border for a little holiday.

As we continued on towards our vacation destination to Bonner's-Ferry Idaho for the weekend, I could hear the wailing of a police siren from behind us, then it abruptly cut off its sound. Looking through my rearview mirror, I noticed a cop car behind us with its top cherry lights rotating brightly.

Darlene was furious and reminded me that I was being pulled over for open liquor, as she pointed to the gutless keg that stood behind me in the back passenger seat of my vehicle.

I parked to the side of the road as the police vehicle pulled closer up to my rear car bumper. The police officer could be seen getting out of his vehicle and putting on his police hat, then slowly approaching my driver's passenger door.

He looked over at my back seat noticing the open liquor - my six pack Labatt's Blue beer, and started the traditional rundown, " You're being ticketed for open liquor." The fine was around $90 dollars for open liquor.

After being issued the fine, the ticket seemed to take forever to arrive to my Edmonton mailbox once I returned from my holiday trip to Bonners Ferry, Idaho with Darlene. I'd estimate 6 months had passed since the issuing of that ticket. I had already given up on looking in my mail box for that anticipated reminder.

About three years after that incident with the open liquor violation, I was now into my battles with being an unemployed homeless drifter. The ordeal had me constantly traveling from one major city to another right across Canada looking for suitable employment so that I could lay my hat somewhere and start a new future.

While on one of my many traveling stints across the land, I was stranded on the highway, after a motorist dropped me off about a mile from Creston B.C. There I stood in the dark night awaiting my next ride to Vancouver. I could hear the wolves about a quarter mile up the road. They were picking up my scent. On average a car would pass by me every minute and the howling would then start to die down. Again the howling of wolves carried on, but it was no surprise since another vehicle was passing by me. Another 10 seconds later the howling seemed to die down altogether,

It made sense to me. What else could have made those wolves

leave the nearby area other than the commotion of noisy motorists driving by them, which seemed to save me from a possible feeding frenzy. I decided that it was the right time to walk a mile to nearby Creston for my own safety. I was feeling tired from all that hitchhiking. I last stayed in Calgary.

I decided that a homeless shelter would be the right place to check into for the night, before continuing on with my trip to Vancouver the next day but I was now feeling too tired to make the effort to find a shelter in Creston. It then dawned on me from my previous encounters with the Creston R.C.M.P officer who had issued that ticket for open liquor that never arrived at my residence mailbox in Edmonton back in 1989 that the Creston R.C.M.P. detachment and its many holding cells would be the ideal place to get my free accommodation for the night, instead of having the constant worries about being stranded too long back at that highway waiting for another ride and looking over my shoulder for the hungry predators nearby. After all, all I had to do would be to ask the desk officer over at the Creston R.C.M.P. detachment to look up my name on their computer files for a ticket that I had not paid because it never arrived at my residence in Edmonton.

When I arrived at the Creston R.C.M.P. station, I told one of the desk officers that I had been fined for open liquor when I was pulled over in my Camarro while driving past Creston in 1989. I then said, "If you find my name for that unpaid ticket that never ever arrived at my residence in Edmonton, I'd rather do jail time for a few days, so I can have a room for the night and rest up before I continue on to Vancouver."

The desk officer cracked a smile and asked for my name. I then spelt it out in full. The desk officer said, "Lets see if we can find a Mr. John Zapantis in our record files." He continued to stare into the computer and quipped with laughter, "Looks like you'll be sleeping under the stars tonight, because I can't seem to find a record of that ticket that was issued out to you for open liquor back in 1989. Sorry we can't give you a cell for the night, when there's no valid reason to."

Then with all that frustration a humorous thought popped into my mind. That R.C.M.P. officer who pulled over my car near Creston on that Hi-Way back in 1989, while fining me for open liquor and confiscating my six pack of beer, probably never filed the ticket after writing it out to me. He must have ripped it up after I drove off and then drank up my six pack later, partying at my expense..

I was all upset about this scenario and finding out that I'd be heading out again to the Hi-Way and no roof over my head for the night. While leaving the police detachment all frustrated, I'd realized the R.C.M.P officer wrote out that ticket, drank all my beer and had one hell of a party, getting away with the crime. He not only got his man, like the old popular R.C.M.P adage goes, he got my prized beer, too, and they say that crime doesn't pay? I guess I'll let the ASN readers be the judge of that one!

Measles and Mumps

By Sharon Austin

Recently, I heard on the news that there was a measles outbreak in British Columbia and then another in Toronto. I was surprised that something that was once so common place would actually make the news. When I was a child back in the fifties, catching the measles was just one of the rights of childhood. There was no immunization for measles, mumps, and rubella as there is in the present time. If someone in the class came down with the measles, it was almost certain that it would make the rounds of the school. I remember the fever, sore throat and the itchy red rash covering my torso. Mom hung an old blanket over the window to keep the bedroom in semi-darkness as it was believed that bright sunlight could damage the eyes of a child with the measles.

When my sister was born, a woman in the ward at the hospital had scarlet fever. Mom brought the germs home, and my eldest sister who was three and my brother who was six came down with scarlet fever. Poor Mom had a newborn baby, and two very sick children to care for on the homestead without electricity, or running water. The health nurse came and put a sign on the door that our house was quarantined to try to prevent the spread of the disease. My sister was gravely ill with scarlet fever and in her weakened condition she came down with what was then called yellow jaundice. Thankfully, they both recovered and are now senior citizens.

Mumps was another common childhood disease, and my sister, Linda and I both caught the mumps at the same time. My brother, who was a teenager, was sent to stay with relatives in Leduc so he wouldn't catch the disease. Mom was worried because it was thought that complications of the mumps could make a boy become sterile.

At first , it wasn't too bad having to stay in bed as we were really sick and slept most of the time. I didn't even feel like eating, and it hurt to swallow. Our big orange tom cat seemed to know that we were sick and he would lie beside us by the hour comforting us with his loud purr. Living on the farm, we mostly drank milk, water or coffee and in the summer Mom would make Kool-Aid that was five cents a package.

Dad came home from the store in the small town a few miles away: "I've brought you girls a special treat," he said smiling at us. In his hands was a large can of pineapple juice, something that I had never tasted. Dad poked two holes in the can with a nail and hammer and poured us each a cup. The pineapple juice slid sweetly over my tongue, but when it hit the swollen glands in my throat it began to burn like fire. I clutched my throat and began to scream and cry and poor Linda did the same. I will never forget the look on my Dad's face as he realized his sweet gift had brought us such pain!

Before long, Linda and I were feeling a lot better and we couldn't wait to get outside to play. It was early spring, and I could see the golden sunshine and new green grass out the small bedroom window. Mom didn't want us going outside and getting cold before we were completely well, so we passed the time drawing pictures, writing stories and reading books. Mom and Dad had to take my eldest sister to the doctor so they left us alone for the afternoon. Linda and I were feeling quite well so Mom thought we would be all right on our own. Just before they left, Dad turned and said, "By the way, that old mother cat, Growler, has had kittens in the hay stack."

I looked at Linda and she looked at me and not a word passed between us but we both knew what we would do. I watched as the old car rattled out of the gate, then we were on our feet and running for the door. Like two prisoners long held in the dark recesses of a cave we sprang out into the glorious sunlight as our bare feet caressed the new spring grass. We stretched our thin white arms up to the sky and twirled like two rag tag ballerinas in our faded flannel nightgowns. I will never forget the joy of that spring day; everything we had been denied was so achingly beautiful. I breathed deeply of the fresh spring air, and pressed the softness of grey pussy willows against my cheek. Then we were running for the haystack, our pale white legs flashing in the sunlight. The kittens looked up at us with round blue eyes full of innocence and beauty. There were five of them, two black and white, two orange, and one a fluffy cream color. We held them gently, and basked in the pure joy of that day.

"How were the kittens," Dad said with a wink at Mom. I began to tell him how beautiful they were, then I stopped and looked at Mom. "It's ok." she said with a smile, "You girls are well enough to go outside now. You'll be back to school on Monday." Linda and I groaned loudly. Having the mumps was no fun but the two weeks off from school had been wonderful!

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Supper – 5:00 to 7:00 p.m. Tuesday

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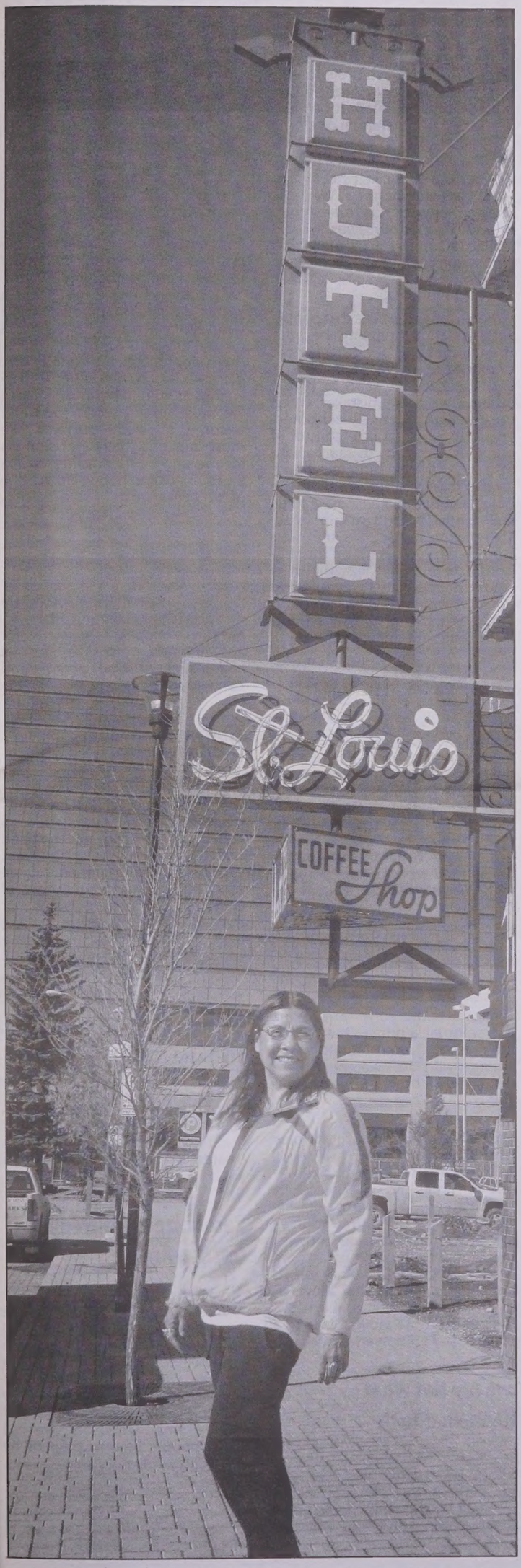
Supper 4:30 to 5:30 p.m.
Thursday and Saturday



Andie outside the St. Louis Hotel in Calgary Photo by David Burke

A Pre - Plan for the St Louis Hotel Centennial from 1914 - 2014 Celebration

By Andie W.L.

I will begin Part 2 in the series about the rejuvenating or the St. Louis Hotel with this quote by CMLC representative Susan Veres; she states," the Louie does require some tender loving care! It's 100 years old next year and it's our vision that these historical buildings add a lot of character to the {East} Village." (Global News Politics, Apr. 3, 2013 3:04 pm).

I agree completely and dream of seeing this Centennial year celebration becoming a reality!

I'm hoping to see some fabulous local country music bands; to see them play their gigs outside for the 10 days of pancake breakfasts. There could be kiosks set up to sell the famous Deep Fried chicken and chips and other items that are on an old Retro Menu that I have. A Banner could be on display that was just about the main St. Louis Hotel Tent saying "Come in and enjoy the quiet atmosphere in air conditioned comfort "Meet me at the St. Louis, Meet Me At The Bar at 430 - 8th Avenue SE. Calgary, Alberta. We have 3 Parking Lots, Color TV. Shuffle Boards, and All YOUR MUSICAL SELECTIONS – just 8 plays for 25 cents".

The most important highlight of the Food Menu would be to sell the same food that was sold in the late 1950's to the 1960's. A greater thing could be if the price of the food was the same as the old days as well. The menu reads: "The famous Corned Beef on Rye - 50 cents , Cheese Dog - 40 cents, Hamburger - 40 cents, Cheeseburger - 40 cents. Then also: The St, Louis Special, 2 pieces Flavor - Crisp Chicken , French Fries, Cole Slaw - $1.00 Pickled Sausage - 25 cents, Beef Jerky - 20 cents, Pickled Egg - 15 cents, Hot Rod - 10 cents, Dry Kipper - 10 cents, Pepperoni - 15 cents, Peanuts, Beer Nuts, Chips, and Cigars Available.

High Balls - 1 & 1/4 oz. Rye - 75 cents, Rum - 75 cents, Gin - 75 cents, Vodka - 75 cents, and Scotch - 75 cents. Your choice of Mix Included. Wine - 4 oz. Red - 75 cents, White - 75 cents, Beer Draught - twenty Cents, Bottled - 45 cents, Soft Drinks - 20 cents, Tomato Juice twenty Cents, and Coffee – 20 cents." Come in and enjoy the quiet atmosphere in air conditioned comfort At the bottom of the Menu it says Printed By Premier Printing Limited. Calgary Alberta.

My vision for the Centennial

I vision seeing Artisans setting up their rental tents, and can't forget them selling their Famous St Louis Hotel T-Shirts with their trade mark Logo on the front left side, saying "The St. Louis Hotel Where The Stampede Starts And Never Ends" On the back of the T-Shirt it would say "St. Louis Hotel" And the name of the Beer Sponsors" "Presents Stampede Centennial 1914 - 2014, with a picture of the Louie and on the bottom of the T-Shirt it would identify the home town of Calgary, Alberta, Canada.

I remember in the early 1980's, the night before the kickoff to the Calgary Stampede Week and the beginning of The Greatest Outdoor show on earth; the opening always began with the Stampede Parade. A rancher had started a yearly tradition, he had parked for the last few years in the parking lot his in his GMC truck. As I stood near the paper boxes talking to (now passed away) long time employee and tenant Pete Rosenvard, the rancher went over to his truck and began to unload some straw bales from the back of the long box of his truck. Pete said, "He has put down the straw bales here for as many years as I can remember!" He had taken about a half dozen of the straw bales and laid them neatly up against the wall from the Westside corner of the sidewalk to the parking lot cement markers. He repeated the tradition yearly in the early 1980's. I would like to see them keep the straw bales as one of the traditions bought on by a local rancher. Bring the straw bales back to the Centennial Festivities this 2014 year! I can now vision the Louie decorated with plastic small flags strung up in one of their famous florescent lime colors. The small flags would be hanging just under the black St. Louie Hotel sign. The saying on the flags could say the sponsor of the beer and the famous Trademark "The St. Louis Hotel ; Where the Stampede Starts and Never Ends". Also, I can't forget the historic electric lights on the St. Louis Hotel that were always lit up during the entire ten days of the Calgary Stampede.

It would also be my dream come true to see a black and white banner put up each day saying, "Celebrating the 100th year Anniversary of the St. Louis Hotel Circa 1914 - 2014. I'm hoping that Susan Veres and her colleagues on the CMLC will somehow come up with a similar plan to celebrate the centennial for the St. Louis Hotel. If the plan isn't going to be for this year's 2014 Calgary Stampede Festivities, then I and other supporters will continue to live on the dream of the Festival coming true before the end of the Centennial Year. It is important that a historical heritage site be designated for the St. Louis Hotel. Once the St. Louis Hotel is restored and is made ready to lease out by the City of Calgary. a potential renter can be found to occupy the new digs

Once your have a renovated St. Louis Hotel it could bring back the main traditions. Old friends could visit there again to enjoy the 10 days of Stampede Events, a true East end Trademark, " The St. Louis Hotel "Where the Stampede Starts and Never Ends".

Transforming from Victims to Empowered Human Beings

By Maria B.

When we choose to be defined by the abuse that we have gone through, we take the identification as a "VICTIM" We must never allow people to bully us into silence and be made a victim in any form.

I am not alone in being a victim of physical abuse, abandonment, sexual assault and emotional trauma from childhood experiences. In fact, I believe that every one of us had to walk that path; we can not escape it or change it but one thing that we can do is "validate it".

Throughout my growing years I was under the erroneous belief that my childhood history could gain me sympathy but in reality what I found out that no one cared. But I still used it some times; I needed to feel validated and believed. It was of great importance what others would think about me.

Indeed I do not need anyone to validate my history of abuse. I am the protagonist of my history and I know exactly what happened and now I realize that through every step I took, it made me stronger and I was able to get out from the black hole of self pity. where you are constantly looking for footholds and slipping into the blackness vortex of self pity.

Abuse in childhood is very traumatizing. You become an invisible child, the kind of child that feels so isolated, so alone, so fearful, so misunderstood and so very flawed.

I was born with a plan on who I would become. I had all the necessary gifts that would allow me to develop my gifts and all of that was taken from me, turning me into an object that was to be picked on, to be denigrated, blamed and used and misused any way my parents desired to do it.

I was never considered a gift or even cherished as a child; I was an ugly inconvenience that served the unrealistic expectations of my parents. Growing up I learned a personality trait in which the person feels powerless and unable to take action in life or in anyone's life. Through this I acquired a sense of powerlessness which is a learned behavior as my core needs were never met adequately. My parents never bonded with me so it was quite easy for them to abandon me without ever realizing it was their responsibility to take care of me. From six year old when they left, I had a whole life to live with my flaws and this became a very ingrained part of me. All those flaws that my parents saw in me had become ingrained as my core beliefs.

All of those traumatizing events that took a hold on me with fear and feeling vulnerable became imprinted in everything I did or I couldn't do because of fear or because I felt I was not good enough to try it. I can see with clearness now how the abuse affected every part of my being making me feel like a "victim"

Our basic needs to feel safe, protected, unconditionally loved and accepted and having a sense of belonging had not been introduced in my early life. And these are basic needs of human beings. From a child I was graded as an unwanted object.

Victim Mentality

Unfortunately, lacking the fulfillment of my basic needs does not make an empowering mindset. Here are some of the behaviours of a person with a victim mentality: Even if we want to we are unable to take responsibility for ourselves and our actions. The reason that we are unable to do this is because my parents did not model "responsibility" well. If anything we learned from them how to blame others for our behaviours. We tend to live in a defensive state. We assume that people are out to get us and the only thing we are sure of is that it is not going to be good for us. We try to elicit sympathy or expect pity from others because we see ourselves as martyrs. We tend to nurture negative outlooks seeing the worst in everything. In order to avoid others to keep them from hurting us. We prefer to live in a isolated state. We live through our past and hold unto it because we do not understand it. We tend to reject others and fabricate reasons in orders not to be hurt. We nurture low self esteem and lack self-confidence. We are unaware of what it is to feel good or proud about ourselves. We live feeling afraid, with shame about who we are, with guilt feelings and depression.

There comes the time that people with a victim mentality, because they continue to put others down to make themselves to feel better and because we tend to blame others if we make mistakes, when our negativity forms a black dome. Trying to strive to take control of our lives, we learn to manipulate others and live in falsehood, always trying to get even to the point that the people closest to us feel controlled and manipulated. There comes the time that you stop blaming others, stop running from others and realize that it is your responsibility to your loved ones, and more importantly to yourselves, to initiate healing, and it all starts with self awareness.

Core Beliefs

We have to examine our core beliefs. It is hard job but very rewarding. First we have to learn what our core beliefs are about ourselves. Usually our core beliefs have been formed by what our parents thought about us. I took every core belief about myself, questioned it, and completed it with the truth of who I am.

Basically this is my recognition of who I am. The following statement contains my fundamental beliefs and values that have become my life statement:
I am a gift to the world. I am unique and spiritual, a human being with the right to live honouring who I am and with the awareness that I can become the very best in this world.

Our inherited and intrinsic value is in our presence and this value will remain with us forever and forever has no end. And this is exactly what you are too. Make your life statement and allow yourself to make your presence known in the world through your actions. Realize that being vulnerable is not a flaw, it is a gift that allows us to empower ourselves and move forever from the victim state to a place of self empowerment.

We Are Not What Happened To Us

Be aware whenever you see any of the traits of victim mentality in yourself, the first step is recognizing how and why this state of mind is being nurtured by us or others. Remaining in the victim mode, will rob so much happiness from your life. Take the first step of courageousness toward emotional growth.

Forgive

In order to heal and move past your inner pain, you must forgive. Forgive the people that hurt you and who have harmed you and abandoned you. Forgive yourself; holding on to anger will only destroy you. And it will destroy the people that surround you. Also we must refrain from treating victims as vulnerable and helpless. We must unlock victimhood and become a strong survivor. We must make a daily decision to forgive and be determined to live a successful and happy life despite of our past.

Responsibility

We must make a proactive decision to stop blaming others and not to use our past as an excuse for anything. We must take personal responsibility for our actions and behaviours; empower ourselves.

Gratitude

I believe that just knowing that we have faced the kind of storms that might have threatened to knock us down, through the truth and recognizing that, we stand strong We have an incredible potential. By having the Law of Gratitude, you believe firmly that the Universe or God, depending how you view it, is there to give you what you want when you ask for it, that you deserve what you get. You relate to what you have and act in accord to it.

Live The Truth of Who You Are

Live and ensure that you are in alignment with your values, treat others how you would like to be treated, teach others how to treat you.

Recognize the Incredible Gift You Are

You are not vulnerable; you have inner strength and resilience. You are not weak and helpless; you are empowered. You are not a victim - yes we were victimized when we were children because we were vulnerable but we are adults and we are empowered and we will teach people how to treat us by respecting ourselves first.

Rob's corner in Calgary

By Robert Champion

Recovery still ongoing

Recovery is still ongoing in Calgary from last June's floods, the worst in history as far as I know. A lot of people in this city still hurting as well as some businesses. Already a low vacancy rate before the floods, was made even worse afterwards. Many people were displaced, refugees in a way. Add into the mix not enough affordable housing made the situation even worse. At the same time many other Calgarians came to help those who were in need.

Weird Strange world

Today as compared to when I was growing up in the 50,s, 60's and 70's is strange to me. Then we interacted with one another. We had telephones to communicate with each other. We carried miniature address books around in our back pockets, at least the guys did. There were no such things as food banks and school shootings. There was more interaction between people. Much easier to meet people back then before on line dating. Parents weren't afraid to let their kids go outside and play.

Many people, many places, many times

I'll never forget about most of the people I met growing up in and around Vancouver (mainly North West) B.C. where I lived ages five to age 28, where I went to school. I'll never forget about some of the teachers I had in elementary school or the school nurse Mrs. Clark. A lot of good memories come from those early years, like having a paper route when I was around 13 years old. Never was in a gang, had instead two or three close friends I hung out with, otherwise would have been too complicated. Back then loved bike riding, getting a Sunday or a holiday bus pass and riding all over sight seeing and exploring. Didn't start getting interested in girls till I was 16 - January 1967.

Get the feeling sports fans - hockey fans

Get the feeling that again no Canadian team is going to bring back the Stanley Cup to Canada or keep it here. How many years since a Canadian based team won the Big One. Almost 20? Really sad, especially when this is supposed to be our game. Like I heard basketball was a Canadian invention, and Canadian football has been around for what a hundred years? We being Canadian are so passive, we don't want to upset our American cousins. They can take almost any sport and turn it into a business. A lot of Canadians would rather work here, that's where the money is after all!

Rob's say for the day

Is spring finally here? Not too bad a winter. A little colder and more snow than 2013. Now hope all but a distant memory. Looking forward to chirping sparrows and squawking crows, seeing lush green grass, the smell of barbecues, the sound of lawnmowers. Warm summer type days and nights, the smell of freshly cut grass. Enjoying the beauty mother nature has to offer.

Poetry

by Ryan Robertson

Today

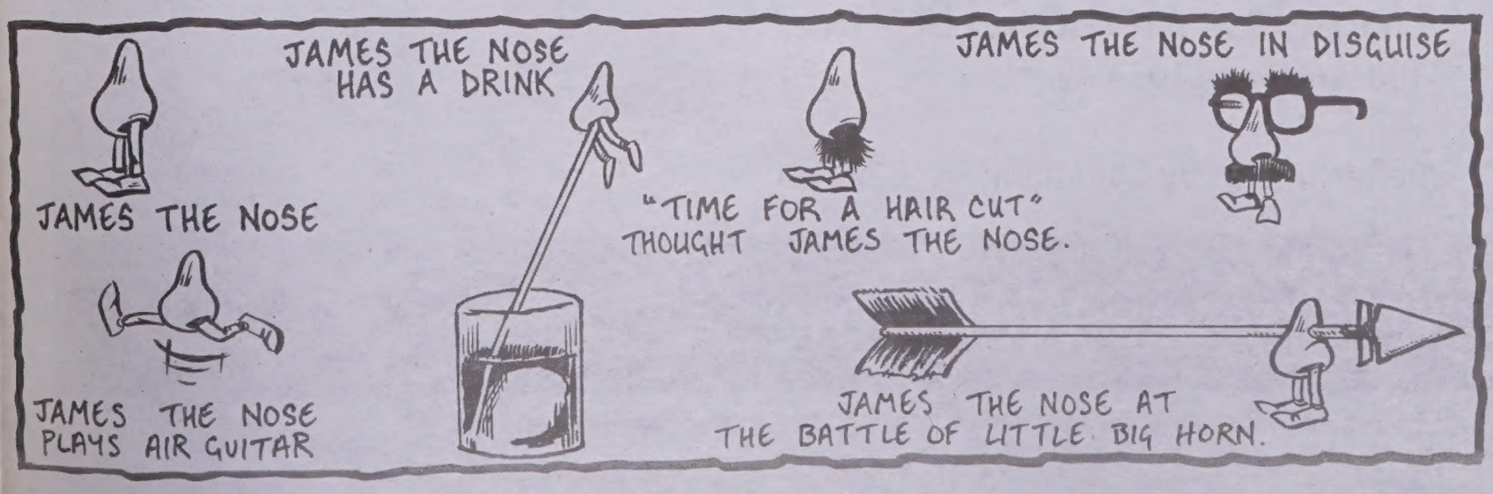
Today
The sun
Came out
And I
Was over-joyed -
It had
Been hiding
For a long time
And the world
Had hung
It's head
In sorrow... .
Now a smile
Surfaced
And the weight
Was lifted
Let's hope
It is spring
For winter
Has held
Its icy grip
To long
And it is
Time
To live again... .

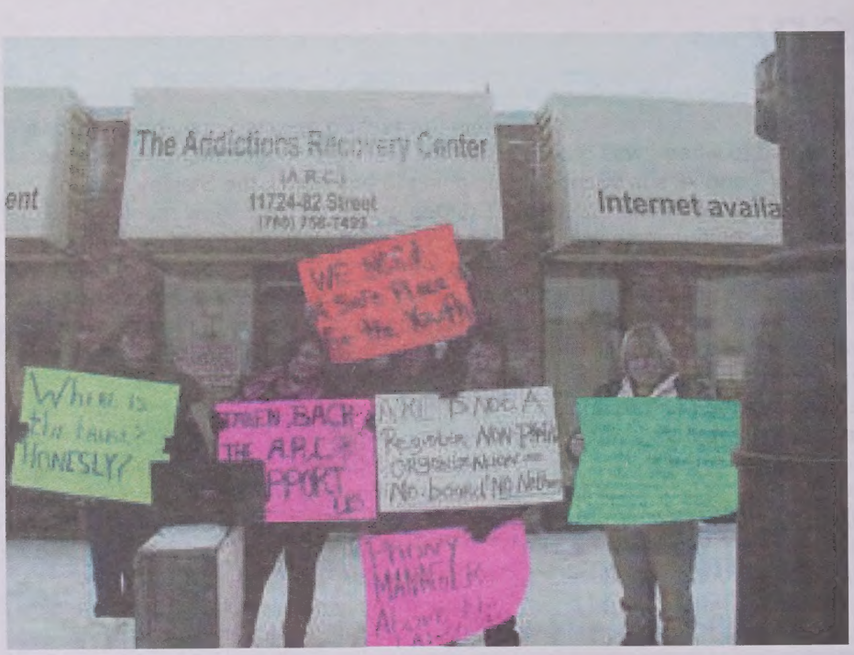
Gerri

Nothing
Can ever replace
The joy
You brought us...
Nothing
Can ever replace
Your knowing
Of just
What to do... .
Nothing
Will ever replace
The memories
We cherish of you
From heaven
Where we know
You are
And truly belong... ..

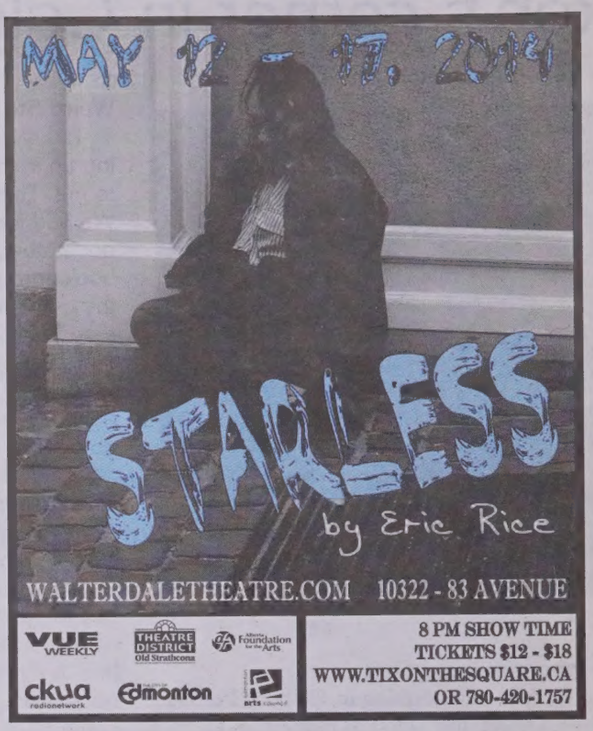
Not the Last Poem

This is not
The last poem
I will write
For there
Will always be
Inspirations
Good and bad
To express
My emotions about -
There will always be truths
To unveil -
There will always
Be you
To drive me
To understanding
Perfection -
There will
Always be
My love of words.
My seeking
Of how to improve
Meaning
In a world
Of uncertainly -
But most of all
there is the thought
That perhaps
What I express
With paper and pen
Can make
A difference
In somebody's life...





Volunteer members of the Addictions Recovery Center were out protesting alleged mismanagement at their centre and are very determined to get their facility back to normal working order once again. Left to right are: Shania Powder, Robin Powder, Shashony Green, Carol Powder and Sarah Blabey. Photo by John Zapantis



Members and board members hold protest at Addictions Recovery Centre

By Linda Dumont

The current board and members of the Addictions Recovery Centre held a rally outside the building at 11724-82 Street in April to protest alleged mismanagement of the centre by Darwin Kulba, who currently calls himself the president of ARC. He was put in that position on a trial basis in 2011 and now is running the centre.

"He dictates everything. He doesn't recognize the full board. We (the board) want to take back control," said Carol Powder, one of the current board members and an organizer of the protest rally. "We are doing the rally to expose him. I want his mismanagement gone. We want someone else to run the centre so it will be happy and safe."

Kulba took over running ARC November 2011. Powder's complaints against him include lack of accountability for the money and donations, and barring people out of the centre. In additions, he parks his truck and keeps his other personal belongings at the centre. Arc is a place where groups can hold AA and Al Anon meetings, and a hangout for recovering addicts. Prior to the protest, there were also programs including karaoke and use of the Internet.